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REMARKS ON VOLNEY'S "RUINS OF EMPIRES," WITH A
REFUTATION OF HIS STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINES OF
CHRISTIANITY.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.

SIR,

A Correspondent in your last number having adverted to the celebrated "Ruins of Empires" by Mr. Volney, as a book in which his own objections to Christianity were most ably explained, and his ideas on the subject enlarged upon, I have been induced to give that work an immediate perusal; and now propose submitting to your attention the substance of the ideas and observations, which have occurred to me, on a hasty indeed, and perhaps indigested, but, I trust, impartial and unprejudiced review of the subject.

Mr. Volney's performance, as indeed is sufficiently evident from the title of it, is by no means confined to religious subjects, but takes in almost every question that relates to the nature of society, and the moral and intellectual condition of mankind. In his general views and conceptions on these subjects, he displays a benevolence of intention, and an ability and acuteness of research, which most incontrovertibly attest his claim to the titles of a philosopher, a metaphysician, and a friend of the human race; whilst his style, endued with a peculiar smoothness, and a remarkable aptitude in the conveyance of his ideas, under pleasing and impressive images, is precisely of that nature which is the most likely to captivate the attention, and carry conviction to the mind of his reader. To this general character however must be claimed an exception, in the instance of Christians, which he evidently either misunderstood himself, or has purposely misrepresented to his readers; and this being the main object of our enquiry, and one, besides, which must be decided by facts, and fair argument, rather than by a mere statement either of agreement or disagreement in opinion, I shall proceed without further preface to state the reasons which have led to this conclusion, and to examine those passages in Mr. Volney's work by which I think it can be fully supported and justified.

On perusing his 21st chapter, which he entitles "the problem of religious contradictions," the reader is naturally struck with

the passage (quoted in your last number) which relates the remarkable co-incidence between the religion of Bhodda, or Beddou, and certain circumstances which by many have been, and by some few still are, believed to form component parts of Christianity. That such a co-incidence really exists, I by no means feel disposed to deny; nay, that it exists in many more instances than that expressly alluded to in the passage under consideration, it is my intention, in the course of this communication, to exemplify. Nor is it to the sagacious mind of Mr. Volney that we are indebted for this discovery, as he has merely availed himself of the pious labours and discoveries of the pretended friends of Christianity:—the priest, the monk, the Jesuit, and missionary, who have ridiculously attempted to support their doctrines by the discovery of analogous circumstances and modes of faith in the religion of every country they have visited, and to defend their practices from their co-incidence with the superstitious observances of every people, whether savage or refined, ignorant or enlightened, with whom they have formed the smallest degree of commerce, or acquaintance.

The absurd and impious doctrine of the Trinity has been, on this principle, considered as irrefragably supported by its discovery amid the reveries of the Platonist, and the traditions of the Bramin; whilst the divinity of Jesus, the miraculous conception, and the many other wonderful and absurd circumstances with which priestcraft has burthened Christianity, are found shadowed forth in the birth of a Beddou or a Chrishna, and exemplified in the numerous incarnations of the Indian preserver of the universe, Vishnu.

Mr. Volney has, indeed, in the present instance, confessed his obligation, by referring us to what it would appear he justly called an indigested work, the *Alphabet Thibetan*, of *Georgi*, a writer whose idle reveries, say the Edinburgh reviewers, but ill supply the scarcity of information which we possess with regard to that country, and who, "seduced by some fancied analogies with regard to the Christian religion, was led to imagine that this ancient superstition was only a modern perversion of its sacred truths."* Not that such conclusions, absurd as they may appear, have been by any means confined to Mr. Georgi, or any other individual; for unfortunately, a somewhat similar, and equally dangerous notion, has been entertained by almost every writer who has treated on the religions of the eastern world—so strong, indeed, was the co-incidence between the general traditions of those countries, and absurdities which have at various times being amalgamated with the religion of Jesus, that it even induced in the enlarged and enlightened mind of Sir William Jones, an opinion,

* Edinburgh Review, October 1806.

“ that the spurious gospels which abounded in the first ages of Christianity, had been brought to India, and the wildest part of them repeated to the Hindoos.”* But the improbability of this supposition is so glaring, that how exalted soever our ideas may be as to the discernment of this truly great man, it cannot be entertained, even for a moment, whilst there is another presenting itself to the mind of the most superficial reader, which will be found at once much more probable in itself, and supported by circumstantial, and even positive evidence, as almost to amount to demonstration, which is no other than that these spurious gospels, together with the spurious parts of the otherwise genuine ones, in which and which alone are to be found the co-incidences in question, were derived from the traditions of the Eastern nations; grafted upon Christians by the converts of those countries, with whom it is known to have been a constant practice, to introduce into their new religion, many of the doctrines and observances which formed a part of the one they had abandoned. Where indeed but in those parts of the scriptures, which every rational Christian rejects as interpolated, shall we find doctrines, or events, similar to those which are really related of Christna, and of Beddou? And it is no small corroboration of the fact that they have been so interpolated, to discover an evident derivation for them all in the absurd superstitions of the Pagan and the Hindoo, whilst the really rational and enlightened parts of our religion stand, amid the various, the almost innumerable pretenders to revelation, unimitated and alone.

Mr. Volney, among many other things, has discovered, or rather others have been so obliging as to discover for him, that we are indebted to the Samaneans for the idea of the miraculous conception, and the story of the massacre of the infants by Herod. To the Samaneans then, in the name of all the gods of the East! be the honour of the invention, and all the advantages to be derived from it—let the malignant star, that rising in the East, first brought the wise men to corrupt the simple doctrines of Christianity, return to whence it came—let the pages which record its appearance be torn from our Bibles, and we shall then have to produce, not indeed miraculous conceptions, and lying relations of massacres that never occurred, but in their stead, what the Samaneans never thought of, and Beddou was incapable of bestowing on them, a system of pure and rational religion, which, applicable to the nature of man, and consistent with that of the Deity who conferred it on him, is as much superior to the superstition of the Thibetians, as the enlightened mind of the European is to the confined comprehension of the inhabitant of Africa, or Hindostan.

* Sir William Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India.

From the indefinite and artful manner, indeed, in which Volney has stated certain of the supposed actions and doctrines of the Deity of Thibet, one might be almost led to imagine that he had taught a system of morals, and pursued a line of conduct, somewhat similar to that taught and pursued by Jesus ; than which idea, the imagination of man could scarcely conceive one more completely void of all foundation. As a specimen, take what is attributed to this people, with regard to the belief in a first cause—"at the beginning (says the Lama) there was one only God, who having passed an eternity in the contemplation of his own reflections at length created the world," &c. Now it is expressly asserted by a modern writer on the subject (Captain Mahony, in his "Discourse on the Doctrines of Bhouda" or Beddou, Asiatic Researches, vol. 7) "that they do not acknowledge in their writings, a supreme being, presiding over, and the author of the universe ; asserting merely a first cause, under the vague denomination of Nature ;" and he actually adduces some of the arguments which they make use of to prove that the world was not created. And should it be asked, who then is this Bhouda or Beddou ? we may reply upon the same, and other equally respectable authority, that he is considered as the chief among 22 supreme, and 120,535 inferior deities, who, after inhabiting with them for ages the 26 heavens which his disciples acknowledge and believe in, was induced, at the particular desire of several divinities of distinction, to make his appearance on this our terrestrial globe, where he was frequently born as man, "but his greatest, and most solemn incarnation was 3000 years ago, in the province of Cashmire, under the name of Fôt, or Beddou, for the purpose of teaching the doctrine of self denial and self annihilation"—his birth being also at that time attended with those remarkable circumstances, which have so commonly been attributed to that of Jesus.

I have observed that such a co-incidence is by no means singular in the mythology of the east ; in confirmation of which, it may be here observed, that all the circumstances attending the birth and early years of Beddou, are attributed by the Hindoos to the last and most solemn incarnations of *their* God, Vishnu, under his name of Krishna, or Christna.* So striking indeed is this similarity, that there can be no doubt,

* See "Moor's Hindoo Pantheon," art. *Krishna*—Sir W. Jones on the Gods of India, &c. The reader will probably have remarked the co-incidence between the name of the Eastern god, Christna, and the appellation Christ, as applied to Jesus. Volney has concluded, from this circumstance, that the religion of Jesus, together with this name of Christ, was borrowed from India (see *Ruins*, ch. 22) ; but the dissimilarity of story and character (except as to the interpolated passages of Matthew and Luke) is so great as to render such a supposition wholly without

but that both traditions have been derived from one common origin. His birth is also said to have been attended by many miraculous circumstances, and his life being sought after, was the cause of many children being slain. Escaping however, unhurt, he was brought up by shepherds, till thirty years of age, when he entered on the purposes of his mission, and performed the most remarkable miracles; such, for instance, as the lifting an immense mountain with the tip of his little finger. Piety, humanity, and self-denial, are also his peculiar attributes, which are exemplified in his having promoted one of the most bloody wars that had ravaged India for centuries, and yet more, by his carrying on a series of the most licentious amours, that ever polluted the pages of the heathen mythology. If any doubt, indeed, remained of his identity with the Beddca of the people of Thibet, and of Mr. Volney, it must be wholly done away by the co-incidence of their both possessing 40,000 concubines. And these are the Gods, it seems, from whom we have borrowed our ideas of Jesus, and this the mythology on which has been founded the fable of Christianity.

Mr. V. must have, surely, before he could have come to such a conclusion, or hazarded such a surmise, been endowed with a mode of judging, and of reasoning, peculiar to himself, and which we shall in vain attempt either to fathom, or to imitate. That he really thought the belief in one only God, was the foundation of any other religion than that of Jesus, I can scarcely bring myself to believe; and if he did not think so, it will not be easy to find any other motive for his representation of the contrary, than that of a rooted prejudice against the Christian religion, a settled intention to misrepresent, and an ardent desire to depreciate it by every means in his power, whether fair or otherwise. As some proof, indeed, that such was really the case, it is only necessary to observe the different nature of the expressions which are made use of in describing the Deity of the Christian, and that of the Lama of Thibet, who, though represented as entertaining precisely the same opinions on the subject, are severally made to express themselves in the following manner:—

The Lama acknowledges “*one only self-existent God, who, having passed through a whole eternity absorbed in the contemplation of his own reflections, resolved at length to manifest his perfections to created beings, and for that purpose produced the matter of the world.*” Enlightened ideas! sublime and philosophic doctrines! But let us hear the Christian—“*God, after*

foundation, whilst it will remain as a matter of speculation how far the similarity in the names may have been the original cause of those corruptions and interpolations having been adopted into Christianity in the first instance by the Indian converts.

passing an eternity without doing any thing, at length bethought himself, without any known reason, to make the world from nothing." Comment is here unnecessary, and censure, if it attach to this, must equally attach to every part of Mr. V.'s work which at all relates to Christianity, as, by a strange fatality, he seems destined to have been incapable of making a fair statement, or writing a correct observation on the subject—so compleat, indeed, is the misrepresentation, that it would be scarcely too much to say, there is not one single fact, doctrine, or institution appertaining to real and uncorrupted Christianity, which is to be found even distantly glanced at, from the beginning of the volume to the end, except indeed, it be to attribute them to sects who never heard of them, and religions with whose existence they are utterly incompatible. It may, however, be replied that this is mere assertion; but to be convinced of the contrary, it is only necessary to peruse the following summary of all that Mr. V. in the various parts of his work, has said on the subject.

The Christians are described as the worshippers of Jesus, who only differ from the Mahometans, by dividing their indivisible god into three persons; their religion is represented as founded on visionary and allegorical interpretations of the Jewish scriptures, and as having been promulgated by the most bloody and intolerant persecutions, under the pretence of diffusing justice, charity, and mercy. Their notions as to the Deity we have already seen, and they are further said to believe, that God, having made the universe in six days, found himself tired on the seventh; that the first pair, designed for perfect happiness, were forbidden to taste a fruit, which was planted within their reach, but that, having done so, all their race, as yet unborn, equally incurred the punishment of their transgression; that the God of Mercy, having permitted mankind to damn themselves for 4 or 5000 years, at length ordered a well-beloved son, who though begotten, was without mother, and eternal like himself, to die on the earth, to save mankind—the majority of whom, however, still continued in the road to damnation; to remedy which this God, born of a virgin, after having died, and risen again, commences a new existence every day, and under the form of a small piece of bread, is actually multiplied a thousand fold, at the pleasure of the basest of mankind.

This detail is besides plentifully sprinkled with sacraments and indulgences, confessions, absolutions, and penances, and not a little adorned by the splendid ornaments, and superb dresses, with which it abounds to profusion; the sight is bewildered amid the variety of colours, and the senses confounded by the contrariety of opinions. Attire "red, purple, black,

white, and speckled ;” controversies without number, and creeds the most discordant ; mitred heads, and senseless dogmas ; long beards and unfathomable mysteries ; real persecutions, amid pretended toleration ; affected benevolence covering actual maliciousness ; tortures upon earth and eternal torments in the world to come—such are the features of the gloomy picture, such the incidents of the terrific tragedy, produced to the world by Mr. Volney as a correct likeness and transcript of the religion of Jesus.

The Quaker, the pietist, and the enthusiast—the Papist, the Protestant, and the Presbyterian—play the principal characters in this impartial and unprejudiced representation. Popes, monks, priests, vagabonds, in short, of every description, fill up the scene, and the catastrophe is most ably and appropriately brought about, by the entry of the familiars of the inquisition, and no very distant prospect of the flames of an *auto da fè*.

Now your correspondent, Sir, has asserted himself to be a man that has been in the habit of examining and enquiring into the religion of Jesus—he has seen through the impositions of priestcraft, and beheld in their true colours the ridiculous creeds of the establishment—the doctrine of Unitarianism, or the belief of one only God, has operated forcibly on his mind, and he has visited the conferences of your society, with attention and delight. To him, therefore, as to one possessed both of the means, and the abilities to decide on the subject, we may boldly address ourselves, to know whether this representation, or any the minutest portion of it, bears the most distant resemblance to the religion which was revealed by Jesus, promulgated by his apostles, and which stands recorded in the books of what is called the New Testament ? If to this question he can conscientiously reply in the affirmative, then, indeed, will I pronounce, with Mr. V. that Christianity, like every other religion, or superstition upon the earth, is a senseless and absurd imposition, founded in blood, and erected on the ruins of reason and common sense ; but should he, on the other hand, be compelled to reply in the negative ; should it appear that this representation is both erroneous as a whole, and false and unfounded in all its parts ; that it contains, not even, as it were, by accident, one single fact or doctrine which makes the smallest approach to truth, but that every thing which really relates to the religion of Jesus, has been, as if it were from a consciousness of its strength and invincibility, most carefully and studiously avoided ; then may we with an equal degree of certainty conclude (not indeed that Christianity is true, and the writings which record it authentic, for that assuredly wholly rests on other grounds), but that that truth

and authenticity stand wholly unaffected by the statements of Mr. V. and that the credit of the system cannot possibly be impeached by the repetition of any of the assertions or conclusions, which he, upon such false representation and premises, has made upon the subject.

His general aim has been to shew, that every system of religion is equally authentic, and equally absurd—all derived from one common source, and all productive of the most serious and extensive mischiefs to mankind. But would it not have been as well if he had made a distinction between those evils which have really been produced by one religion, and those which could only proceed from the actual and positive breach of another? Thus when Mr. V. makes it appear that the professors of Christianity and Mahometanism have equally, at times, been bloody and intolerant, we may perhaps be compelled to admit the fact; but, I think, we must deny the inference that has been deduced from it, viz. that the religions themselves are founded on similar principles of cruelty and persecution. The Musselman draws the sword at the express command, and in pursuance of the example of his prophet, whilst the Christian who does so acts in direct contradiction both to the faith and the conduct of his master, and is, in fact, unworthy of the name.

The same confusion runs through all Mr. V.'s ideas with respect to a priesthood, his general argument on the subject appearing to be, as well as I can collect it, as follows:—Priests being impostors, and every religion having a priesthood, therefore is every religion an imposition. Now I cannot but think that if he had really understood the question he was treating of, or did not wish to misrepresent it to his readers, he would rather have reasoned thus:—Priests being impostors, and every religion but Christianity having a priesthood, then is the Christian religion a single exception to the general charge of imposition. Want of space prevents me from entering upon this part of the subject; but your correspondent, if he has really examined the subject, and has attended to your conferences, has not to learn that a priesthood is an institution which is no way sanctioned by the religion of Jesus.

The authenticity of the scriptures is, it seems, the point at issue, and this can only be rendered doubtful by the supposing them to have been the artful forgeries of designing and ambitious men, originating in imposition, and only to be carried on by a system of priestcraft, as is known to have been the case with other religions. But, unfortunately for this hypothesis, it happens that the Christian scriptures, unlike those of the others in question, do *not* support that system, nay stand in direct opposition to it; and it cannot surely be seriously contended,

that priests would have invented a religion, whose first act was to dispense with their services, or forged writings, that, instead of supporting their claims, only tended to render their titles disputable.

The historical and moral evidences in favour of the reality of the existence of Jesus, are in themselves so glaring and so strong, and have been besides so frequently discussed by those who are much more competent to the task than myself, that I have not thought it necessary to enlarge on that part of the subject; one or two short observations, however, occur—which, before I conclude, I must beg leave to make. Mr. Volney has represented Faustus, a Manichean of the third century, as saying, that the gospels, &c. were written neither by Jesus or his apostles, but a long time after, by certain unknown persons. Now though this may sound very well from the pen of Mr. V. in the 18th century, it certainly comes rather awkwardly from a writer of the third, as the stating the forgeries to have been written a long time after Jesus would, by bringing the imposition up to the very time in which he wrote, render it so glaring and notorious, as neither to require or be deserving a refutation. From this fact, however, whether well or ill founded, there is drawn this conclusion, though whether it be the conclusion of Faustus or of Volney is more than I can discover—it is, that “the existence of Jesus, is no better proved than that of Osiris, or of Hercules, or Beddou.” This assertion may possibly with some carry great weight, but for my own part, I must frankly confess, that I should think it equally reasonable to doubt of the existence of Buonaparte, because I disbelieved the exploits which are commonly attributed to Tom Thumb, and Jack the Giant Killer!

I remain, &c.

Paddington, April 15, 1812.

J. D.

ON PRIVATE PRAYER.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.

SIR,

WHEN the bigotted and superstitious are disposed to calumniate, they are seldom at a loss for a subject; the mind that can persuade itself to believe a phantom to be a reality, or an absurdity to be a truth, will find as little difficulty in creating as in believing them; and he who opposes such characters as these should remember that pride and prejudice produce obstinacy, and an obstinate man pays as much regard to the justice of the expedient, to which he resorts for his defence, as a knave does to honesty, or an assassin to the sixth commandment;

whoever, therefore, uniformly exerts himself to remove ignorance and folly, must expect but little, in return besides calumny and abuse. Such, Mr. Editor, appears in various instances to be the treatment given to the Freethinking Christians. The time was when they used to pray and sing in public like other folks, but the spirit of inquiry was roused in their minds, and when they searched the New Testament to discover the authority for public worship, in order that they might be able to give to every man who required it of them a good and sufficient reason for practising it, to their utter astonishment they found none; and what could they do in this dilemma? They had always been habituated to public social worship, and we all know that it is not the most agreeable task to give up old habits and customs, particularly when they are sanctioned by general practice, for new ones, which are likely to meet with nothing but derision and contempt. But they had declared that they would be governed by the New Testament—that whatever was there clearly enjoined as a Christian institution or practice they would conform to, and whatever was omitted they would likewise omit, regardless of the agreement or disagreement which such conduct might produce with the general actions or opinions of men; and having made this determination, when they found that the New Testament had no authority for public social worship, what alternative had they to be consistent? Why, surely, none but rejecting it; and this they manfully did, in obedience to their judgments, notwithstanding the repugnance of their own feelings and the probable contumely that would ensue. And what construction has been put upon this, by those

“Who hate the excellence they will not reach?”

A very unjust one truly, but at the same time a very natural one. “The Freethinking Christians (say they) will soon be Atheists; they have already given up all ideas of worship, and their next step will be to give up all ideas of a God.” O ye of little faith, and of understanding too, that can reason in this way, how many times must ye be told that light is not darkness nor darkness light; or how often is it to be rung into your ears before you will comprehend, that it does not follow because a man rejects falsehood that he must necessarily reject truth; that it does not follow because he surveys with indignation and disgust the dark pile of corruption, that he cannot therefore admire the beautiful and sublime fabric of Christianity; or that because he will not worship the great parent of the universe in the temple of idolatry, he cannot worship him in the temple of truth. Surely, a man can do one thing without doing another, or believe what he thinks

to be true without being obliged to accede to that which he knows to be false. He may reject public worship because it is not authorised by the New Testament, and because it is calculated to make hypocrites; but he may believe in the propriety of private worship, because it is expressly enjoined in the New Testament, and is calculated to mend the heart. Such I conceive to be the sentiments of the Freethinking Christians: they regard public social worship as an institution not to be found in the New Testament, and as they profess to be guided by that book, if it is not therein contained, they have nothing to do but to reject it as not belonging to Christianity. But private worship, or more properly private prayer (for it is to that I would now wish to bend my attention) is clearly authorised and appointed in the New Testament; for Jesus, when speaking to his disciples concerning prayer, gives them the following directions—"and when thou prayest, be not like the hypocrites, who love to continue praying in the synagogues and at the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men; verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou prayest, go into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly."

Here is a command given by Jesus to his disciples, the substance of which is, that when they prayed they should not pray in public, where they might be seen by men, but they should retire to some place in private, and there ask of their father whatsoever they needed. If this be not in the first instance a prohibition of public prayer, and in the second an enjoinment of private prayer, I confess I should be glad to know what it is. That it implies the latter, I have never yet heard disputed; let us then endeavour to trace the operations which it is likely to have upon the human mind, and the probable advantage that may result from its practice. We well know how difficult it is for the mind to acquire such an ascendancy over the passions as to regulate them invariably by the principle of virtue; and we have too many instances upon record, of the brightest geniuses being buried in the gulf of dissipation, which, if they had been well regulated, would have shone in the sphere of excellence as stars of the first magnitude. How pitiable is the condition of such men, and how valuable must be every system that is calculated to assist in saving them from the vortex of oblivion, and bearing them up to the proud pinnacle of virtuous fame! They lose themselves for want of system—they have no guide—none to whom they can apply for direction—and being thus at sea without pilot, compass, or chart, how can they do otherwise than strike upon danger, if danger is in their way?

But let us suppose them under the influence of the Christian religion—let us suppose that they are convinced that there is a God who delights in virtue and benevolence—that every thing in existence is under his compleat controul—that he regards his creatures as his own children, and that in proportion as they are virtuous or vicious so he rewards and punishes, or apparently discards—that to those who are good or desirous of being so, and who place in him a full and entire confidence, he will listen, and comply with all their requests, so long as they are consonant with justice and propriety; let us suppose a man with these ideas, and at the close of the day ere he sinks as it were into a state of temporary death, surveying his past actions and motives, and in the language of mind thus addressing his great and best friend—“Father, I thank thee for the many pleasures thou hast bestowed upon me this day; forgive me the errors I have fallen into, and if any one hath acted towards me otherwise than he ought to have done, be thou my witness that I harbour no rancour in my bosom against him; but as thou hast so often and so kindly forgiven my faults, so do I forgive him, and intreat that thou wilt return him good for evil. Assist me in removing from my disposition every thing that has the least appearance of evil, and in forming my character to every thing that is good and excellent. If it please thee, prosper me in the sphere of life in which I am placed, and give me the means of alleviating the sufferings of my fellow-creatures; but if prosperity will lessen my virtue, or retard me in the pursuit of excellence, rather let me be in indigence and poverty, and enjoy the smile of thy approbation. In these, however, as in every other circumstance of my life, whether it be pleasing or painful—

“Great cause of all effects, thy will be done!”

Is it possible, I would ask, for a man thus daily to hold communion with his Maker, and when he rises in the morning, refreshed by repose, to return thanks for the additional favour, and to request his guidance and protection throughout the ensuing day; and when the day is closed again to repeat the survey of his actions, and to hold a fresh communication with his God? Is it possible for a man to do this, and yet continue to be a vicious man? I cannot believe it; it is not in the human mind to withstand such repeated impressions of the deformity of vice, as must be made on it when it daily goes into the presence of a being to supplicate his protection, and is at the same time conscious of having wilfully violated his laws. Either his vicious practices will be discontinued, or shame and remorse will soon prompt him to relinquish the privilege of

addressing his Maker, being conscious that he is under the mask of a guilty hypocrisy which he cannot conceal.

If such be the effect of private prayer, why need we make further enquiry as to its utility or importance? It is indeed true, that it cannot make any alteration in the will of the Deity, because in his wisdom he has no doubt determined on every circumstance or event that is necessary to take place in order to compleat his grand design, and nothing can alter his determination; but what then? are we to conclude because we cannot alter the will of the Deity, who has already resolved on doing the best that can be done for us, that therefore we ought not to thank him for what he has already done, and entreat a continuance of his favours? This would be a selfish conclusion indeed; it would be like a child saying to its parent, if I thought I could get anything more from you by thanking you for what you *have* done, or by requesting still the favour of your benefits, I would do so; but as I know you have fully resolved on doing all the good for me you can, and as I know nothing can alter that resolution, where can be the necessity of thanking you, or entreating you to do that which you have already determined to do? So then, because we cannot obtain *more* by it, that which we have received, or may in future receive, is deserving of no regard! Surely this reasoning must proceed from ingratitude, and from a want of that benevolent disposition, whose effects we daily and hourly experience. What if the Deity *has* determined on the line of conduct he will pursue, was it not a voluntary determination? May he not alter it if he pleases? Is not every benefit we receive from him a purely free gift? If so, then it has an equal claim to our gratitude, whether it proceed from the resolution of a moment, or come as a link in that great chain of determination whose beginning and conclusion is known only to the Supreme.

It will probably be asked, what effect can prayer have upon the Deity, or what good can it do him? Why none, truly; nor was it ever intended that it should. We cannot increase the happiness of God, neither can we affect his disposition, or change his mind. Why then should we pray to him? I answer, first because he has ordained it; and, secondly, because it is calculated to produce the happiest effects on the mind of man; reminding him of his entire dependence on the bounty of Providence, it will check his pride, and teach him humility; by exercising a grateful disposition, it will banish all selfishness, and teach him to be thankfully content with his lot; and by frequently looking at the bright excellence of the God of nature, it will shew him the true contrast between vice and virtue, and stimulate him to imitate that which appears to be

so lovely. If these advantages are not sufficient to recommend private devotion, tell me the virtue that has a better plea.

O! how delightful 'tis to bend the mind
To thee, Dear Parent of our life and bliss,
To thank thee for thy kind paternal care,
To tell thee of our ev'ry joy and grief,
To claim thy blessing on our future way;
And then, encourag'd by thy love divine,
To sink contented into sleep and thee.

Kingsland Road, April 12, 1812.

TIMOTHEUS.

THE CHARACTER OF MOSES VINDICATED.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians Magazine.

SIR,

I AM not desirous of suspecting the integrity of any man in matters of religion, but I think the conduct of the Deists is quite sufficient to rouse suspicion. After all the arguments that have been used by Christophilus and others in defence of revealed religion, it would highly become them manfully to assign equivalent causes for all the effects that have been adduced. Instead of engaging in endless-skirmishes, let them rally their forces, and, by incontrovertible evidence, produce causes for effects, or acknowledge that effects are without a cause in this particular. If they would act thus we should have hope; but no, when all the trifling objections are answered which they have brought, they retire to their oracle for more, to wrest the authenticity of the whole Bible.

Your correspondent D. T. in the last number of your Magazine, introduces the exploded argument of Thomas Paine respecting the character of Moses (Numb. xii. 3), and is pleased to rest the authenticity of the Pentateuch on this detached passage; saying, "Now the advocates for the books of Moses may take which side they please, for both sides are against them. If Moses was the author, the books are without credit; and if he was not the author, the books are without authority." If this could be admitted as an axiom, I venture to say there could be no writing of antiquity handed down to us which would deserve the least credit, because they are all exposed to the enmity of designing men, and therefore liable to interpolations.

Again, it does not follow, if Moses did not write the whole, that he is not the author, because he that founds a system is the author of that system, though he employs another to complete that which he had begun. Look at a watch that goes through thirty or forty different hands previous to its completion, and yet the whole is referred to the primary cause, viz. the watch-maker. This is so evident, that it will answer to every work

and to every circumstance in life; and this, I apprehend, was the case with Moses; he wrote every thing antecedent to his life, together with the law,* and on this basis was the Jewish theocracy established, and Moses justly reputed the author of the Pentateuch.

A remarkable instance occurs in Deuteronomy xxxii. 44—"Moses came, and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people." Here the whole performance is ascribed to Moses, and yet the writer goes on to say "he and Hoshea the son of Nun." Shall I say then the song was without authority, because Hoshea took an active part in its delivery? certainly not—Moses was the head, and not the hand.

From this, and many other circumstances which might be adduced, it appears to me, that Moses, perceiving Joshua (as well as Caleb) to be after his own heart, he committed to them this important trust; and they, acting in every iota consistent with the confidence he had reposed in them, affixed his name to the performance. By this means it is we have the exit and obsequies of Moses recorded in his work, which could not possibly have been done had he wrote them all, I presume.

I think so far from Moses deserving the obloquy of coxcomb, (which indeed is not worth noticing), his successor has fully proved, that his illustrious example (with one exception) is worthy the imitation of the most exalted mind; and if your correspondent D. T. would view the Pentateuch in this light, his embarrassments would vanish, and he would then see one grand uniform display of the divine interposition on the behalf of man.

Your's, &c.

April 11, 1812.

J. K.

ON THE STABILITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.

SIR,

THIS letter, Mr. Editor, though not designed to be a very long one, shall contain all I purpose to say on the subject of miracles. In every discussion, where an appeal is made directly to the understanding; where the writer has no views on the prejudices or passions of his reader; all that is valuable and important in it, may be usually drawn within very narrow limits: redundant matter, frivolous observation, or dress and embellishment, taking up, generally speaking, the bulk of every performance. Besides, nothing is more common, when debate is carried to undue lengths, than to see the accent of the gentleman giving place to the rudeness of invective; and the coolness of argument, to the bitterness of altercation.

* Deuteronomy xxxi. 24, 25, 26.

I am not solicitous to convert : if my sentiments are not founded on truth, let them perish. Nor have I personally any object to secure, beyond the gratification which every one feels when his own opinions become prevalent. That these opinions will gradually advance, in proportion as mankind become better informed, it is natural perhaps for me to expect : and this gradual advancement is all which I desire. Sudden and extensive changes are always problematical ; often, mischievous. The progress of truth, however, is irresistible ; checked indeed, at intervals ; but sure, in the end, of lasting triumph. Futurity, in this respect, offers to the contemplative philosopher, the most cheering prospect. The moral world shaken, it is true ; but systems of superstition tumbling into ruins ; the reign of bigotry closed for ever ; and forms of civil policy, contrived by wisdom and improved by experience, diffusing, through all classes of the community, the blessings of equal government ! justice, truth, and liberty, filling the earth : despotism, oppression, and error, banished from the world !— But first, ages must roll away ; empires be overturned ; and generations, yet to come, swept into perpetual oblivion.

I now hasten to meet the animadversions of W. C. I endeavour, on all occasions, to state my sentiments perspicuously : I wish to be fully and clearly understood : I do not, however, it seems, always succeed. Perhaps indeed, to be able so to express every thought, as to exclude the possibility of misapprehension, is a felicity not to be attained. Your correspondent, W. C. is not quite sure, notwithstanding all I have said, that I myself do not admit, that cases have occurred, the explanation of which necessarily requires and involves a departure from physical laws, or the ordinary succession of events. So far, however, am I from making any concession of this sort, that I am prepared to deny positively and unequivocally, every fact, whether supplied by history or tradition, *the explanation of which necessarily includes a miracle.* This is the ground which I take ; and if any expression has dropped from me, capable of being tortured into any other meaning, I can only say, that I wish I had employed, in the room of it, words more explicit.

As to the incident respecting General Washington, I never meant, when I framed that little story, to oppose it, in all its circumstances, to the resurrection of our Lord. I meant only to state a simple case ; involving a miracle certainly, and well attested ; but for which miracle, no extraordinary reason could be assigned : and I gave it as my opinion, that such a reported miracle, would not, at present, be received. I still think so : I still think that it would not be received, by any intelligent man ; and that it ought not to be received.

I had said, that certain facts, referred to by a writer in your Magazine (Christophilus), were, "either such as might be accounted for on principles common to our nature; or, such as lost themselves in some of those rare and extraordinary combinations of events and circumstances, which the revolution of ages can hardly be expected to repeat." Your correspondent, like the lynx in the fable, whetting his teeth and waiting for his prey, eagerly catches at this supposed concession; and after expressing much concern lest I should *lose myself* in a dilemma, asks, with no small triumph, "what becomes of my argument against revelation, drawn from the '*usual course of nature*' and the settled order of events!"—Mr. W. C. has had the good nature to speak of my *acuteness* and *discernment*. Really it would give me infinite pleasure, to speak of my opponent in terms equally obliging. But the present, truly, is a most unfortunate occasion. How W. C. in general employs *his* acuteness and discernment, I certainly have no right to know: it is quite clear that, at the moment he read this unlucky paragraph of mine, his intellectual faculties were not, at least, in violent exercise. By what rules of interpretation, pray, has your correspondent discovered, that "a rare and extraordinary combination of circumstances," involves an infraction of the laws of nature, or miraculous agency? Are there not many incidents recorded in history, a repetition of which it would be in vain to look for? The capital of the Roman empire was saved by the instrumentality of a goose; Caligula appointed his horse to the consulship, and fed him with gilded oats; Alexander set fire to a city of great extent and population, only to gratify a courtesan:—does the world ever expect to behold *again* spectacles such as these? And yet they imply nothing supernatural: they are *extraordinary* indeed, but not *miraculous*.

It would be a most invidious undertaking, even supposing it could be accomplished, to show by what management and contrivance the popular system of belief in this country at first gained admission into the world. He knows nothing of mankind, who is not prepared to look for inconsistencies and contradictions in their sentiments and life. We have a remarkable instance, in our own time, to what extravagant lengths the religious passion may carry people. I allude at present to Carpenter, a disciple of Joanna Southcot, and preacher at the *House of God*, near the Elephant and Castle. This man has received numberless communications from heaven; and hears strange voices. Crowds flock to hear him every Sunday; and I myself have conversed with many individuals who verily believe in the inspirations of this poor fanatic. To those who are fond of speculating on human nature, this man will be found

an object of singular curiosity. I have often gazed at him in the pulpit for an hour together, and listened to him with the greatest attention : I have watched, with unremitted vigilance, the train of his ideas, the workings of his mind, the turns of his imagination. Sometimes he speaks rationally, for five minutes ; he then raves. Now, open and sincere ; and now, cunning and artful. This man, I am persuaded, rather than confess himself an impostor, would burn at the stake with all the pleasure in the world ; aye, and glory in it too. A genuine enthusiast is one of the most unaccountable phenomena in nature. There is no saying what he will do, or what he will not do.

A note, at the foot of page 162, in your last number, complains that I have misquoted the words of your correspondent W. C. ; that I have put the singular for the plural. Well ; I will put it the other way : the alteration will not, I believe, affect my argument ; though W. C. entertains a different opinion. The corrected passage will stand thus : “ The gentleman begs to know, what is meant by ‘ *the laws* of nature ; ’ and even solicits a catalogue of such laws.”—What the advantage is, which your correspondent hopes to secure, from this alteration, my sagacity, I confess, though very *acute* and *discerning*, does not enable me to discover. A *law* of nature, “ is that order, according to which the Deity conducts any natural operation.” *The laws* of nature, then, “ are those methods, according to which the Deity conducts *all* natural operations ; and from which he never deviates.” The point of W. C.’s objection, if his objection has any point, seems to consist in the difficulty of giving a compleat enumeration of these methods, or laws of nature. But surely it requires no very uncommon degree of acuteness and discernment, to perceive, that our ignorance of some laws, can no way affect our knowledge of others. I do not know, it is true, what methods the Lord of the universe has thought proper to adopt for managing the affairs of Jupiter, the Moon, or the Georgium Sidus ; but I do know perfectly what methods he has adopted for carrying on an infinite variety of operations on the surface of our own globe. I do know perfectly that *it is not* a law of nature for the sun or the earth occasionally to stand still : I do know perfectly that *it is not* a law nature for iron to swim in water : and I do know perfectly that *it is not* a law of nature for men or women, after they are literally dead, to start from their graves and mix again with human society. Nor let your correspondent feel himself at liberty to treat these declarations with sneering, or to call them the overflowings of an arrogant presumption. It is no compliment to the Deity indirectly to assert, that he has made us incapable of arriving at certainty in any thing. To

assert this, is an outrage to common sense—is an absurdity, too gross to be endured. Mr. W. C. refers me to Shakspeare for information—to Shakspeare!—I beg to acquaint this gentleman, that Shakspeare is better known as a *poet* than as a *philosopher*. And if the lines which W. C. has given us, be a fair specimen of our bard's philosophical acquisitions, his fame, I acknowledge, appears to rest on its proper foundation. What! to admit, on the authority of *Shakspeare*, a manifest and glaring falsehood, because there may be things in heaven or earth of which we have never heard! This is rather too much.

“Are not the *moral laws* of nature (inquires W. C.) as immutable and constant as the physical?” Certainly. The only difference seems to be, that the moral laws are more complicated. *Men* will sometimes tell truth; and sometimes lie. *They* are, therefore, in this respect, not so much to be depended on, as the rising of the sun or moon at its appointed hour. Not because the sun or moon is more under the direction and controul of absolute laws, than the creature man; but because that these directing and controuling laws, are, in the case of man, more multifarious, or less exposed to observation.

These are all the remarks, which I think it necessary to make, on the subject of miracles. I shall close them with a recapitulation of the principal arguments; and then bow respectfully; reserving to myself, however, the liberty of restating any point, which may not have been expressed with sufficient clearness and precision.

1st. Whatever may be the true character of the Deity, that character must be taken from his conduct towards mankind *at large*; and not from his supposed partiality to a *few favourites*.

2nd. Nothing can be more fallacious than, first, to clothe the Deity with certain attributes, which are not fairly deducible from the works of nature; and then, to argue and reason from such attributes, as if they had a real existence and operation.

3rd. It is a fact, beyond the reach of dispute or controversy, that the Maker of the world has, in every age, conducted the administration of his affairs, on principles BROAD, AND FIXED, AND UNIFORM.

4th. That when a missionary urges a belief in revelation on a native of China or Hindostan, by reminding him that there are many appearances in nature calculated to create an expectation that the Deity always intended to lay open, in due time, a variety of important articles for the benefit of mankind, the Hindoo or the Chinese would be perfectly justified in refusing his assent to such a proposition.

5th. That all history abounds with instances of fraud and

villainy, on the one hand; and of weakness and credulity, on the other: in particular, that the testimony of men (especially if they are ignorant men), who speak under the influence of the religious passion, is entitled to no credit or respect whatever.

6th. That a miracle consists in the transgression of a law of nature; and that to represent the creation as a miracle, is to represent laws as capable of being transgressed before they were made: which involves an absurdity.

7th. That I by no means wish it to be understood as my opinion, that there is no evidence on the side of Christianity; but that this evidence, though considerable, is vastly outweighed by the contrary evidence. I am, Sir, your's,

Pentonville, April 5, 1812.

A DEIST.



REMARKS ON THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.

SIR,

A Sense of the magnitude of the subject, a knowledge of the strength of my opponents, and a doubt of my own sufficiency, might, indeed, impress on my mind a humble reverence, and command in me, as it were, an obsequious silence; but a thirst for truth inspires a sentiment which proudly triumphs over my grovelling fears, and prompts me thus to make known the result of my comparatively trifling reflections. With millions of my species, encompassed by the shades of obscurity, and secure from the critic's censure, the keen man's satire, and the controversialist's objections—I might peacefully sleep out the remaining portion of my fleeting hours: but such are thy charms, O truth! that the mortal who can but faintly appreciate thy sublime worth, will turn with disgust from those tawdry mansions, those shining baubles, which delusive fancy supplies him with, and tread with pleasure the rugged path which leads to thy invaluable treasures.

Mr. Editor, the objections to Christianity, which I advanced in my paper, dated Nov. 19, having been replied to in so candid a manner by your correspondent Christophilus, it might reasonably be expected, that I was now about to realize that writer's expectations, by "acknowledging my conviction, or fairly answering the arguments which he adduced on the subject:" and I certainly should not evade so obvious a line of conduct, and one which civility and good manners so evidently demand, were it not to embrace a plan which supercedes the tediousness of discussing these abstract questions, by involving and bringing to issue at once, the primordial and

leading principles of the system. Reflection has convinced me that the objections alluded to, though important in themselves, are absolutely dependant on other circumstances ; for if the fundamental questions are not defensible, then the minor ones fall of course : and if, on the other hand, the primitive positions can be fully established, then the others rank subordinately, and admit only of subsequent discussion. This being the case, I shall not for the present, at least, notice Christophilus's reply, but attempt to make a few remarks on the evidences of revealed religion generally, and more particularly on those which Christophilus has at various times laid down.

By attending to the writings of Christophilus, it will be seen that he frequently and invariably declares himself to be a strict adherent to the mode of argument he has adopted. He states also his belief that the plan has never before been attempted : and since most of that confusion, so generally attendant upon arguments, may be traced down to the want of a clear conception of each other's views, or to some mistaken points ; the time will not, perhaps, be altogether misemployed, if we devote a few minutes to ascertain the nature of this plan. But, in the first place, I beg leave to state my conditions : and they shall be comprised in this simple proposition—that no man shall be accountable for the absurdities of another. I thought it necessary to make this observation, more particularly in consequence of Christophilus having laid so much stress upon the inconsistencies of Mr. Paine. It will be seen, by referring to his preliminary essay, that the examination of this author's religious opinions forms a material part of the subject. He has brought sentence in opposition to sentence, and has confronted passage to passage ; he has made deductions, drawn inferences, and formed conclusions, just as if the majority of his readers, or those likely to reply to him, were necessarily buoyed up by the opinions of Mr. Paine ; or as if they were not at liberty to choose for themselves—to take those of his ideas which suited them, and reject the rest. Now for my own part I must disclaim all connection with this person ; for so far from being one of the disciples of this “ high priest of Deism,” I never read a single page of his religious works in my life ; and I do not say this, because I should feel myself degraded by having the most perfect knowledge of his writings, but because I wish to keep clear of what are denominated his creeds. And now I will attend to the conditions of Christophilus.

He says (vol. i. p. 179, 282) “ I propose meeting Deists on their own principles, putting them on the defensive ; and on the very ground that they reason with an Atheist to prove the existence of a God—upon the strict rules of philosophy, &c.

I mean to demonstrate the truth of revealed religion."—And, again (p. 231) "I purpose to defend it on the principles that Deists themselves admit, and shall call upon them to produce an adequate cause for facts and effects, the existence of which even they cannot deny." Here then, it may be said, we find him in a chosen position: and since here we must continue, it will be as well to reconnoitre a little, and see if we can descry a point that is vulnerable.

The premises themselves indicate that Christophilus will advance the facts which he calls upon Deists to account for; and accordingly he notices the circumstance of the Jews having acknowledged and believed in one only God, and then says, "It therefore remains for them, either to find an adequate cause, or to do justice to revealed religion, by confessing it to be the only adequate cause for such important facts and effects." That is, if, on account of our finite knowledge, and the short-sightedness of our nature, we cannot trace certain effects up to their actual cause, then we must believe that a supernatural cause was the only means that could produce them. This is indeed a new plan; this principle, if I mistake not, gives a license to superstition, which I do not expect to see defended. Suppose that any remarkable phenomenon was to manifest itself in our day, and that it proceeded from a cause which could not possibly be discovered—we may conclude that the philosophers would exert their faculties on this occasion; they would compare and calculate, and attempt to analyze; and yet in the end their conclusions would be nothing more than vague conjecture. In this state of things I would come forward and say to them—my friends, it is in vain you search nature for the cause of this effect; for depend upon it there is nothing short of a supernatural interference that could produce it. It is most likely their answer would be—why, my good man, evidently you must be wrong: and here I would turn upon them and say—where is your authority for saying that I am wrong? You see the facts; you acknowledge it; and you tell me there must be a cause for it: I do then insist upon your producing that cause; and if you do not, then you are bound to subscribe to that which I have given, seeing that it is in every respect a sufficient one, and that, "according to the rules of philosophy, we ought not, in such a case, to multiply causes."

I am not totally ignorant of the danger and folly, which attend the being too forward in making assertions; but I think I shall not hazard too much, if I say, that no man can safely declare, that nature has been insufficient to produce all the effects, that have been produced since the creation, unless he can determine the extent of physical powers; and I would

ask for the man who can do this ? Where is the man, I would say, that can point the depths of the properties of matter ? where is the man who will fix the limits—who will draw the line—who will say, nature, those effects, it is true, owe their origin to thee ; thy prolific source, we must confess, gave rise to their existence : but to these thou wast inadequate—these acknowledge a superior power ? No man I think will venture this ; and yet Christophilus says (p. 285), “ Where is the adequate cause ? I have proved it cannot be from nature, &c ;” and again (p. 364), “ they (the Jews) do assign a cause themselves ; and one not only adequate, but the only adequate cause that can be produced.”

It does appear to me, that the less people know of the operations of nature, the more need they have of supernatural interference, to account for the facts which present themselves ; and I think the egregious errors of the ancients bear me out in this opinion. They were sufficiently convinced that effects were produced, and not being able to trace them up to their actual source, they erroneously concluded that they were effected by supernatural powers ; and according to the above scheme they were perfectly right : for the cause, in their minds, was not only adequate, but it was the only adequate one they could produce. But I shall now proceed to notice the facts which Christophilus has cited, and the arguments he has advanced in the support of revealed religion.

It does not appear that he has produced more than two demonstrable facts : but there are two other subjects, which, though not immediately of this class, will require some consideration ; and so, for the sake of order and convenience, I will make the following arrangement, viz.

1st. The fact of the Jews having worshipped one only God.

2nd. The fact of the Jews being a dispersed, despised, and persecuted people.

3rd. An attempt to demonstrate the genuineness of the New Testament.

4th. An attempt to prove the fact of the resurrection of the body of Christ.

These if, I mistake not, comprehend the leading points of Christophilus's arguments, and I shall consequently notice them according to their order. And first, then, the religious worship of the Jews. Now I know of nothing that presents a greater difficulty, than tracing out the doubtful origin of obscure events, which happened thousands of years ago, and placing them in a clear and conspicuous point of view. Circumstances do occur, the causes of which are difficult to explain, even at the time they happen ; but they are infinitely more so when shaded by the night of time. When we examine the

pages of ancient history; when we read of potent monarchs, of powerful armies, of mighty battles, and of great achievements; we do not yield implicit faith to the account, unless we have the concurrent testimony of various and approved writers. If, then, it is not easy to procure a faithful narration, even of these notorious events—events blazoned in figures the most indubitable—how difficult must it be to arrive at certainty respecting the causes of events, known only to a paltry few, and even, perhaps, misunderstood by them! In such a case the doubtful records of a partial or incompetent writer, instead of furnishing a clear elucidation, serve but to perplex the mind, and render the conclusion more uncertain. The precise origin of the Israelitish worship, and the immediate cause of it, seem to be involved in similar obscurity; and therefore the most that can be done, in my opinion, is, closely to examine the accounts we have received, and compare them with what we well know human nature now is, and what we may suppose it has been: to deduct, infer, and form a probable conjecture:—and this is what I mean briefly to attempt.

But I must digress a little further, to notice the remarks of Christophilus upon this subject: for if I judge rightly, he assumes a fact, and argues from the premises. He seems to have taken it for granted, that even Deists pretend to define the person of God. It may be that some men, unwilling, perhaps, to give up wholly the creeds imbibed in their earlier days, may have gone thus far; and others, when writing upon the subject, may (though against their better knowledge) in order to accommodate their half-minded readers, have made such pretensions; but I am persuaded there are many that presume no such thing. The rational Deist (if the phrase is allowed) will choose to proceed on safer ground. He will view himself—he will view the innumerable objects that surround him—and he will fearlessly declare there must have been a first great cause. He will view the “immensity of creation, and the unchangeable order by which the whole is governed,” and he will infer that the essence of this cause must be all powerful and wise. But here he will erect his standard; and though his contemplating mind will lead him further, his prudence will deter him from asserting what his finite knowledge cannot testify.

Stepney.

A. B.

[Want of room compels us to defer the remainder of this Letter till next month.]

AN EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND.

To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.

SIR,

HAVING shewn in my former letter the origin of the Church of England, I shall now examine its principal doctrines, as contained in its creeds, catechism, and articles. But I wish to be understood, that my object is not to interfere with it as a political institution; for if the supposed representatives of the people were to pass an act that the Monument was the Supreme God, and the cathedral of St. Paul's was his only begotten son, and were to appoint religious service, and a priesthood to conduct it in honour of them, I should not dispute their right so to do; provided they did not call it the Christian religion, or require me to believe their nonsense, and support it. I should certainly look at it as it would deserve to be viewed, as an absurd and idolatrous institution; but while it was not imposed on me, I should consider that I had nothing to do with it, but patiently leave it to the Deity to vindicate his own honour, and to time and reason to clear the minds of men from the delusion. But when a system is established nearly as absurd and contrary to the scriptures as that which I have stated—when all the people of these realms are compelled, by tythes and other impositions, to support it—when the heads of this idolatrous political institution are not content with our silently bearing these wrongs, but persecute men for exposing their absurdities—when an Attorney-general has the hardihood to contend that the church of England is the Christian church, and that Christianity is the national religion, and ought to be supported by the secular arm—when the bishops and clergy declare the church of England to be the Christian church, and tell us that men ought not to be taught to read the Bible, without at the same time being taught their catechisms and creeds, lest it should undermine Christianity—the mind is filled with indignation, and it becomes a paramount duty of every friend to real Christianity to resist their claim, to unmask their arrogant pretensions, to strip this eldest daughter of the whore of Babylon of all her meretricious ornaments, and to expose her in all her pollutions and idolatry naked to the world, that they may be able to distinguish the true religion of Jesus from one which had its origin in lust, avarice, and ambition; and whose doctrines and practices are as opposite to the sacred scripture as light is to darkness.

There never was but one national religion appointed by the Deity, and that was the Jewish. The Christian religion was never intended to be a national one; its design was to unite

in voluntary obedience and union, those that feared God and worked righteousness, in every nation under heaven (Acts x. 35)—it was to prepare (not a whole nation but) a peculiar people zealous of good works (Titus ii. 14). The church of God were not to be those who worshipped God outwardly, but those who worshipped him in spirit and in truth—it was to be one, having one head even Jesus, and to be governed only by his authority ; but in the church of England, the vilest characters are considered as its members—the head of it is the head of different religions in different countries—he is the head of the Romish in Canada and in Ireland, of the Presbyterian in Scotland, and the Episcopal in England. Let any man ask himself, if this can be the church of God, or if it can be proved, to be such, as their own article says every thing ought to be, that is necessary to salvation, from the holy scriptures.

The Romans, at the time the Jews were subject to them, had a national religion ; it was as idolatrous as our national religion ; yet we never find the Jews contending with them about it, as the dissenters from the established church of England now do. The reason is obvious—base and wicked as were the heathen priests, and idolatrous as their church evidently was, they never attempted to call it the Jewish church, or the church of God, and seldom endeavoured to impose their practices and doctrines on the Jews, or called upon them to pay towards the support of a religion they despised ; but whenever they did attempt it, then the Jews resisted their pretensions even unto death. But Christians have been more submissive, they have patiently submitted to these cruel exactions while suffered to enjoy religious liberty in other respects : but when the clergy are not content with receiving our money as a political institution, but arrogate to themselves the title of the Christian church, it becomes the duty of real Christians to resist the unhallowed claim, and to rouse all the energies of their mind, in opposition to so wicked a pretension.

But if the clergy wish to enjoy the fruits of their political institution, let them withdraw their pretensions to Christianity—let them imitate the comparative moderation of the heathen national church, and, contenting themselves with the title of the church of England established by law, receive their pay from the state, as its creature, and leave Christianity to make its way by its own native energies, unassisted by the smiles of a court, and unaided by such pretended and delusive friends.

The first doctrine I intend to examine, and that which is considered the most important in their creed, is the doctrine of the trinity ; the denial of which, according to the law, and the creed of this persecuting church, subjects a man to the most severe punishment in this life, and everlasting damnation in the

next—a doctrine which, if it cannot be proved from holy scripture, stamps their church with the grossest inconsistency, idolatry, and wickedness; for in the thirty-nine articles it is asserted that, whatsoever is not read therein (the holy scriptures), nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite and necessary to salvation. Yet in the creed which they call the creed of St. Athanasius, although it has been proved never to have been written by him (not that it is the worse on that account, for a viler character never existed than he was), yet in this creed it is declared, “that whosoever does not believe the doctrine must, without doubt, perish everlastingly; and that this is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe he cannot be saved.” It is true, that (Article 8) they assert that, “the three creeds, Nicene creed, Athanasius’s creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles’ creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture.” If this be true, then I acknowledge they have not acted contrary to their former article; but if it cannot (which it shall be my business to prove), then what must we think of a church who first declares that not any thing is necessary to be believed but what may be proved from holy scripture, yet imposes upon men a doctrine entirely contradictory thereto, under the severest penalties, both in the present and future life?

But let us examine this important doctrine contained in one of these creeds, that of St. Athanasius—a doctrine, without the belief of which a man cannot be saved. I would fain quote the whole of this precious morsel, did I not fear I should sully your pages, and tire your readers with such a farrago of nonsense, absurdity, and presumption. It states that the Catholic (i. e. the universal) faith is this, “that we worship one God in trinity (i. e. three), and trinity in unity (one);” a falsehood at the commencement, for how can that be universally believed which has always been denied by many?—“neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance; for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.”

Here then, if they have not confounded the persons, they have divided the substance, for I would leave it to any man of common sense to say, how it is possible for three persons to exist as *persons* without being distinct substances; for however they may all be composed of the same materials or substance, yet when they are distinguished as persons, it must be by a division of the substance; for though all men proceed from the same cause, and all are composed of the same materials, the idea of person is that which alone distinguishes one substance from

another, when formed into the shape of man. It then proceeds to detail the minutia, but as if conscious that no man in his senses could comprehend the mysterious jargon, it adds, "the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible." One sentence more would have completed the climax, viz. "and the whole of what we have written is altogether incomprehensible, and therefore ought not to be believed by any man who would wish to be considered sane." After a great deal more equally incomprehensible, it goes on to say, "so the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God: so the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord, and yet they are not three Lords but one Lord; for like as we are compelled by the Christian verity (truth) to acknowledge every person *by himself* to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods or Lords." This part deserves some serious reflections—in the first place we are told there are three Gods, as plainly as we could be told that Paul, Peter, and James, were three men, by saying Paul was an apostle, Peter an apostle, and James an apostle; and then we are forbidden to believe this in the same manner as we should be taught these three apostles were but one apostle, by saying, yet they are not three apostles but one apostle; but at the conclusion they are obliged to admit that the whole of this curious article is not to be proved by "holy scripture," for it is acknowledged that one part is taught by the scripture, the other by the Catholic (or universal) church. So then the church does teach something which holy scripture does not, and Jesus and his apostles were not competent to tell us the whole of this sacred mystery; "for (say they) we are compelled by Christian verity (i. e. the holy scriptures) to acknowledge every person *by himself* to be God and Lord." Yet notwithstanding this compulsion, the church has forbidden them to say what they acknowledge the scriptures compel or enjoin them to do; for it is added, "so are we *forbidden* by the *Catholic religion* to say there be three Gods or Lords;" that is to say, the scriptures do indeed teach us that there are three Gods and three Lords, but the Catholic church, wiser than the scriptures, forbids us, to say what is there taught. Again, "the Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten: the Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten: the Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father not three Fathers; one Son not three Sons; one Holy Ghost not three Holy Ghosts." All this is very plain whether we admit the truth of it or not; but evidently they are, in contradiction to their own creed, dividing the substance; and

therefore whoever believes this must, according to their own denunciation, without doubt perish everlastingly ; for if the father is but one father, and the son is not also his own father at the same time, he has another father ; and if this father begot him without enquiring how or of whom he begot him, he must to all intents and purposes be distinct in substance from his own father, whom he certainly is not ; and if there is but one son, the father of this son must be a distinct substance from this son, for surely he cannot be the father and the son at the same time ; for even according to this creed “ the Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.” Again “ one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts ”—certainly, for it is expressly declared that he proceeded from the Father and the Son, consequently neither Father or Son can be the Holy Ghost, the thing that proceeded from them ; and whatever the Holy Ghost might be before he proceeded from them, when he had proceeded or come out from them, he must be a distinct substance from that out of which he proceeded ; but lest this should be too plain, and destroy the whole fabric they had been rearing, it is said, “ and in this trinity (or three) none is afore or after another : none is greater or less than another ; but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the unity (one) in trinity (three), and the trinity (three) in unity (one), is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of these things.”

Was there ever in this world, among the Pagan priests or Pagan theology, such arrogant presumption, as for men to take on themselves to pronounce eternal damnation upon others for not believing the rankest nonsense that ever was proposed for human belief ? He must believe that the Father is no older than his Son, that the Holy Ghost who proceeded from both, and who of course could not have existed before the son was brought forth, was as old as either ; that he that was the cause of both their existence was not greater than either. And this is read several times a-year in their political Pagan temples. Surely, the men who read it, and those who submit to hear it without contradicting its damnatory denunciations, never think, or they must be the vilest and most debased of the human race. I know it is said by many of the clergy, that they omit it, and by their auditors that they do not join in it ; but the Christian is called upon to act up to his principle, and to leave a church that professes and imposes such glaring contradictions ; especially if we add to this, the whole of their worship partakes of the same idolatry, for in the Litany each is worshipped as God, and at last they are joined together to make a fourth God—“ Oh holy and blessed trinity, three persons and one God,” &c. But it is said, “ he that will be saved must thus think of these things.” If this be

true, ninety-nine out of every hundred of clergy and laity must be damned ; for such I am persuaded is the proportion of those who do not “ thus think of these things.”

I shall now endeavour to shew, not only the absurdity of this creed and its doctrine, and that it is not only not to “ be proved by holy scripture,” but is directly contrary thereto. And here let me observe, by the way, that could it be proved the scriptures taught such a doctrine, it would be the strongest argument against their truth ; for a doctrine so absurd, a denunciation so unjust, as to punish men eternally for what they can’t understand, would be such a libel on the Supreme Being, that it would afford the strongest ground for rejecting them that could be adduced. Deists might cease to write—the doctrine itself would be the most active agent in obtaining conversion to their system. For my own part, I declare, much as I now reverence the scriptures, and count them the best gift heaven ever bestowed upon man, did they sanction this creed, or the doctrine it contains, I would call my children together, I would collect every Bible I had, and burn them as the most abominable libel that ever was published against the majesty of heaven. But, I thank God, this is not the case ; for they not only teach me that such foul impostors would arise who would sit in the temple of God, making themselves as if they were gods ; but they also tell me, that their machinations, though they may succeed for a while, shall fail, and that sudden destruction shall come upon them, when they least expect it. We have seen the work began in France, where a wicked priesthood, who had long blinded, insulted, and trampled upon truth and the people, have been swept away with the besom of destruction ; and he that has accomplished this, has promised to destroy every antichristian establishment. His word is sure—his power equal to the task ; and while we pity the men, we must, as friends to Christianity, hail the day when Babylon the Great shall fall, and truth and Christianity triumph in the ruin of every opposing power. But in the mean time, happy am I to know, that Christianity is chargeable with none of these absurdities ; it is a light shining at present in a dark place, but all its doctrines are pure, just, and rational. It wants but fair play—to be delivered from the foul embrace of kings, princes, nobles, and priests—to enlighten and make happy the whole world. Let us wait patiently—the time will come—the strong pangs of the clergy prove it is not far off—then shall it be found that the religion of nature, of reason, and revelation, are the same, and handmaids to each other. The more one is known, the other will be approved and admired. Then will men see, that revelation was a blessing from heaven, to teach, to illustrate, and enforce the reli-

gion of nature, adding to its benign doctrines the forgiveness of sins that were past, and the assurance of a future life of happiness to the wise, the virtuous, and the good. But this wicked and idolatrous doctrine of the trinity, of three being one, and one being three, which contradicts all our senses, and leads men to worship they know not what—which has deluged Europe with blood and with persecution, with blindness and the most stupid idolatry—will be despised, will be ridiculed, and cast to the moles and the bats, while Christianity will triumph and rise resplendent upon its ruins; for it is contradicted by every part of scripture, by Moses and the prophets, by Jesus and his apostles.

The first law which Moses promulgates is, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord.” God, by the mouth of his prophets, continually declares “I am God, and beside me there is none other.” Jesus declared that the lawyer spoke right, when he said, “there is none other God but one.” Jesus declares that “the Father is greater than he;” and when he prays to his Father, he says, “this is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom *thou* hast sent.” Here he acknowledges, as plain as words can express, that the Father, distinct from himself, is the only true God; and in his temptation he says, “it is written, thou shalt *worship* the Lord thy God” (not Gods); and all the apostles join in the same doctrine. Peter, when praying, addresses the God that made the world, and thanks him for performing a miracle, “by his holy servant Jesus.” Paul says, there is but one God, “for though there be Gods many and Lords many, yet to us (Christians) there is but one God, even the Father.” This is the general tenor of scripture; so says reason, nature, and common sense; and all the passages that *seem* to favour any other doctrine, have been proved to be either forgeries, interpolations, mistranslations, or else misinterpreted by blind bigots, who when they read the scriptures, or enter a church or chapel, leave their reason at the door, and by taking detached parts of scripture, persuade themselves to believe what common sense and a fair examination would teach them to deny.

If what I have stated is correct, and I think I may defy the ablest defender of the church fairly to contradict it, what claim has such a church upon Christians for support? Let them look to the state from whence they sprung; let them be content with their ill-gotten and hard extorted gain, and learn that silence is their best defence—exposure to enquiry must be their ruin. Let them no more persecute men for denying their nonsense; let them not pretend to advocate the cause of Christianity, by prosecuting men for writing against the scriptures or Christianity; but let them leave it to be defended by

those who are not interested in supporting its corruptions, and whose weapons are not carnal but spiritual. For what can blast the fame of the Christian religion equal to that of such men as Erskine or Gibbs defending and panegyrising it in a court of law, and inflicting civil punishment for religious opinions? Let such characters, and all the bench of bishops and clergy, declaim against Christianity and the scriptures, as being contrary to the religion of the state, and every Christian will be bound to thank them; it will raise their value in the sight of every thinking man: but when men, who hold a creed repugnant to the sacred dictates of Christianity, who are paid enormous sums for keeping up the craft, call the church of England the Christian church, and profess anxiety for the scriptures and Christianity, the contradiction is so great that Christians hear it with disgust, and Deists feel further satisfied that they are right in rejecting such a religion, supported by such persons. Be it my task, and that of every friend to real Christianity, to disclaim their assistance—to give them no more pay or support than what as a political institution the law obliges us to do; and let us pray that the time may soon come in which the wisdom of our government, or the dispensations of Providence, may do away every state religion under heaven, and on its ruins raise the fair edifice of Christianity, to warm, enlighten, and make wise and happy the whole of the human race.

I have dwelt longer on this article than I intended: in my future letters I shall be more concise, but feeling the importance of the subject, I have dilated upon it, thinking this alone sufficient for every thinking man.

Your's, &c.

A FRIEND TO TRUE RELIGION.

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THOUGHTS ON THE LETTER OF A DEIST "ON THE STABILITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE."

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

**T**HE instability of your Correspondent "on the stability of the laws of nature," has not a little surprised me. When I call to mind the candour with which his opinions were originally delivered, the anxiety he manifested to defend them, his eagerness to provoke controversy, the various invitations he had given, and the general challenge he had made to any one who would take up the argument with him, I am astonished (if any thing can astonish us in the inconsistency of controversy) at the manner he has treated those who have had the temerity to enter with him in the list of combatants.

In the magazine for March, the reader must be convinced that I had met "a Deist" on his own ground, and that I had shewn, or attempted to shew, the futility of his hypothesis; and yet in the last long letter with which he has favoured us, he scarcely deigns to notice the argument adduced. I certainly have no greater reason to complain than other of your correspondents, who stand in a similar predicament with myself. In the number in which my paper appeared, Christophilus animadverted in a forcible manner on one of the letters of "a Deist;" and a writer, under the signature of Juvenis, in a communication full of deepness of thought, and inferior in nothing to the best productions of this gentleman's pen, had adopted a mode of argument, which, whilst it excites in the minds of his readers a grand and extensive idea of revelation, completely obviates the objections of "a Deist," and swallows up his narrow and partial system in the more comprehensive one which it delineates. And yet all that the writer stoops to in this letter is to refer, "*at least incidentally, to some of the strictures which appeared*" on his communications.

But I must suppose, Sir, that your correspondent has been so much engaged of late with the laws of nature, that he has forgotten the laws of propriety; for his conduct, if not an infraction of the settled and inflexible course of nature, manifestly involves an infraction of that settled and inflexible course of consistency, which ought to characterise every candid writer, and which we had a right to expect from himself in particular. But inconsistency in controversy, I am sorry to say, is by no means contrary to the usual course of events, and is easily accounted for on principles common to our nature; "for a particular mode of thinking long indulged in, we acquire a parental affection, and rather than renounce our creed will surrender our lives." Such was the language of the gentleman at the commencement of this controversy, and his subsequent conduct is but a comment on the sentiment. Personal allusions are not always, I trust, indecorous; at least we have respectable authority for it on some occasions. Thus we remember that "a Deist" himself in a former instance observed that the letter signed T. was "clearly the effort of a young man" (though *en passant*, it afterwards appeared that he was clearly mistaken); but if I can judge from the blind attachment the writer evinces to his darling system, and his eagerness in pressing it on our notice at all times, and on all occasions, I should really suspect him to be in his *dotage*. I have no objection to the gentleman's fondness for his bantling—it is natural; but it cannot be expected, that every body should gaze on it with the same doating eyes. If I cannot admire a *hump-back* or a *wen* as marks of beauty, or consider the

*spasms* or the *rickets* as proofs of strength, I don't see why I should be reckoned "flippant" or "insolent" for just hinting as much. It may be want of taste or judgment on my part, to be sure ; but however, Sir, I shall not be readily offended by any little expression of morosity which the gentleman may manifest, but shall read with pleasure whatever comes from his pen, allowing something to the *hauteur of talent*.

Concerning his last communication, I shall speak with that freedom which I reckon the soul of all true discussion. It is in substance a mere repetition of what he had before advanced ; the principles he sets out to prove are his former principles, and the argument he had already expressed with sufficient clearness to convey a just conception of his system. Now the reader must bear in mind, that what he had before advanced had been amply controverted ; and yet the writer goes on reasoning in the same strain as before, and with as much volubility as though his argument had never been answered, calling to our minds the polemic abilities of Goldsmith's village schoolmaster.—

"Though oft refuted he could argue still."

Your correspondent, Mr. Editor, has thought fit to put words in my mouth which I had never used, and then to ridicule them, for no other purpose that I can conceive but to get rid of the real question, and evade the difficulty with which he found himself encompassed. Ridiculous as he may wish to make my question appear, yet I am so ridiculous as to tell him again that the laws of nature **MUST BE KNOWN** (and, as was then observed, "by the laws of nature I mean *the whole of the laws of nature, and nothing but the laws of nature*") before we can positively ascertain what phenomena and effects are a violation of them. I appealed to the gentleman for this information : if he cannot give it, let him be ingenuous enough to say so—without it, his system hangs by a hair—it is a mere splendid delusion ! a golden dream ! a castle in the air ! a palace of ice !

As the whole of the argument rests on this simple point, I am anxious to be clearly understood ; though I suppose "a Deist" was the only reader who could have mistaken my reasoning before. The gentleman would find some difficulty in simply pointing out *the express and particular law of nature*, which the resurrection of Jesus violated ; for, let it be remembered, that the change of ordinary effects is not necessarily a violation of the laws of nature. But, to demonstrate the necessity in this argument of *every* law of nature being set forth, I would suppose that "a Deist" is acquainted with all the laws of nature *except one*—even then he could not positively infer that the resurrection of Jesus is an infraction of the laws of nature,



because the effect might be produced by the intervention of *this very unknown law*—but as it is, how rash must be the conclusions of the writer, pretended to be drawn from the laws of nature, when in reality he knows little or nothing about them!

We are indebted to the gentleman certainly for whatever light he has been pleased to throw on the chaotic gloom which envelopes the laws by which the world is governed; but still we cannot conceive to what purpose it is (except in pity to our ignorance) that we are told that the trees are green in spring—that the longest day is longer than the shortest—that lead sinks in water—that fire burns wood—and that smoke ascends upwards. It certainly is all very true, and we who know so little of the laws of nature might contribute our share of information to what has been just advanced—summer is hot and winter is cold—carrots are red and turnips are white—sprats live in the water, and elephants on land; and, as the gentleman justly observes, “nothing surely is easier than to demonstrate the constancy and universality of these and similar laws.” Well! and what then, Mr. Editor?—Why! *nothing*, Sir. Cannot “a Deist” perceive that he is struggling with a phantom? Nobody, that I know of, has disputed with him the *immutability* of the laws of nature; but we who think as well as talk about the laws of nature, are led to believe that they must necessarily be so various and complicated, that in many instances they will appear to counteract and even violate each other. We then do not presume to affix their limits and ascertain their boundaries—the subject is infinitely above our comprehensions, though perfectly simple to “a Deist.”

Pursuing this kind of argument, I had attempted in my first letter to shew, that, on the principles assumed by your correspondent, an Indian would be as much justified in rejecting, as false and contrary to nature, the narration of a process perfectly simple and consonant to philosophy, as “a Deist” is in discrediting the resurrection of Jesus on a similar ground; and to the illustration I had given, his reply is, “*let the experiment be made before competent witnesses, and the testimony received or rejected accordingly.*” It is strange that the writer could not see that this is what we have been all along contending for; by this very criterion, we say, let the truth or falsehood of the testimony of the witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus be tried. The rule which he has laid down is a just one; but at the same time it is at war with every part of his system, for it has been his express object to frame an argument *utterly subversive of human testimony*. But the truth is, there are a variety of facts, which, from their own nature, must depend on testimony alone.

To convince the reader that the writer has confounded him-

self, let me suppose any given event is reckoned to-day, contrary to the usual course of events, and that to-morrow an experiment is made before competent witnesses, which convinces them of its truth—these witnesses communicate it to others, but they of course, according to the previous argument of “a Deist,” ought to reject it, because to them there is nothing in the whole range of their observations which bears any analogy to such a process. In this dilemma I would ask the writer, if the experiment is to be repeated to everybody to whom they relate it? If he says, No! Why then it follows, that *human testimony is sufficient to establish a fact manifestly inconsistent with the usual course of events.* If he says, Yes! What’s to be done if the experiment cannot be repeated? Not to multiply instances, how could the Aeronaut, in the situation I had described him, procure the balloon and necessary apparatus to convince the doubting Indian? But, says “a Deist,” in cases where a direct experiment is not possible, we may often make considerable approaches towards certainty, by reflecting on the particular circumstances of the case in point, and by comparing these particular circumstances with the known and acknowledged course of events.” But how could the sceptic Indian do this; how could he make such advances towards certainty? when to his experience there is not only nothing in nature which bears analogy to such a process, but the known and acknowledged course of nature *is in direct opposition to the particular circumstances of the case in point.* Let the writer candidly and fairly review his reasoning, and he must be convinced of its weakness. I am sure he could readily detect the fallacy of such kind of argument on the side of Christianity, where, I confess, I should be sorry to find it.

Determined to destroy revelation, at all events, and in defiance of all consistency, your correspondent, after he had stated the testimony of competent witnesses to be a ground for receiving or rejecting the truth of any fact, tells us “that no human testimony whatever can warrant a belief in miraculous agency or divine interposition.” This is one of his old “preliminaries” with a new coat on: we will examine whether it looks more tolerable for the alteration. But, first of all, to the broad assertion of the writer, I would oppose this simple observation—that if it should be more difficult to believe the evidence in favour of “miraculous agency or divine interposition” to be false, than to admit the existence of such “miraculous agency and divine interposition, no man could be so *sceptically credulous* as to reject it. Much of the argument will depend on what is meant by a miracle—“a Deist” has found a very convenient definition: “a miracle (says he) has very properly been defined a *transgression*

of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity." The definition may suit the gentleman's purpose, no doubt; but I have yet to learn that it is the true one. Whether a miracle is in reality a transgression of a law of nature, or merely the change of ordinary effects by the efficacy of some antecedent law or governing principle in nature, can only be known to God, whose omniscience can scan these multitudinous laws in all their bearings and relations; and to the learned gentleman, I suppose I must add, whose system proceeds on a knowledge equally unbounded. Definitions are at all times difficult to give, even on simple subjects; in the present instance it must be infinitely more so. The objection to "a Deist's" definition of a miracle is, that it pre-supposes a knowledge which nobody has but himself; the definition which I shall submit is, the only one which I shall feel bound at present to defend, viz. that a miracle is a remarkable phenomenon, contrary to the usual operation of nature, and not within the compass (or apparently so) of any of its KNOWN LAWS. This definition will form the only answer I consider necessary to the objections on this branch of the dispute.

The design of this letter has been just to brush away the dirt the gentleman has thrown up in passing so hastily by my argument; in my next, I shall offer a few observations on what the writer has advanced concerning the scriptures, and the character of Deity as gathered from those writings. On the laws of nature it is most likely I have concluded all that I shall have to offer, of a controversial kind at least, as it is not very probable that the gentleman either will or can furnish that information which can alone be reckoned to meet my argument. On that argument, whether weak or strong, I rest, and leave it as a sufficient refutation of all that has been, or may be, advanced by "a Deist."

Two or three remarks on the controversy generally shall conclude this communication: Christianity is or is not from heaven—its divine origin was attested by men like ourselves—we know something of man—we have some settled notions of the laws of the human mind—if they bore testimony to a falsehood, they have acted contrary to the principles inherent in our natures, and violated the most clear and acknowledged laws of human action. The truth of revelation would not be at all affected, even if it could be proved to involve a disturbance of the laws of nature—the Being who gave nature its laws can annul or modify them agreeable to his will, and the disturbance of such laws to accomplish a general design is less a miracle than calling them originally into existence. Whether miracles are occasioned by an immediate act of Deity, or spring from some settled law in nature, is a question only suit-



ed for the vanity of speculation—at the contemplation of the immensity of the subject, human reason shrinks into itself, and into nothing—system and hypothesis vanish before THE SOVEREIGN DISPOSER OF ALL THINGS—nature bows to the omnipotence of his will—revelation declares the beneficence of his designs—and philosophy, expanded by religion, rests on the IMMUTABILITY OF THE LAWS OF GOD.

*Blackfriars.*

W. C.

THOUGHTS ON THE TRIAL OF MR. D. I. EATON, FOR PUBLISHING THE THIRD PART OF PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.

“The truth is, Christianity is the proteus image of every varying country and taste, debased with the impurest mixtures of man; now shackled by superstition, then as falsely sublimed by fanaticism; often forging chains for the person or the conscience; *always made subservient to the established policy*; seldom enlightened or strong enough to influence the conduct, and as rarely looking to the *real happiness or interests of mankind*.”—*Scriptures*, &c. BY A CLERGYMAN OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

*To the Editor of the Freethinking Christians' Magazine.*

SIR,

THE extracts I shall have occasion to give, of the speeches of the Attorney-general and Lord Ellenborough, at this trial, will be taken from the report in the Times newspaper.

In the Court of King's Bench (March 6) this case came on before a full special jury. Mr. ABBOTT, in opening the pleadings, merely stated that this was an information filed against the defendant, for publishing a blasphemous and prophane libel on the holy scriptures, to which he had pleaded—*Not Guilty*.

And here, Mr. Editor, at the opening of this business, two or three questions naturally present themselves—what is it that constitutes “*a blasphemous and prophane libel on the holy scriptures*?” Did the gentlemen of the jury make up their minds on this point, before they gave their verdict? We might have expected from the Attorney-general some clear and lucid statement as to the meaning to be attached to the terms of the information; but for this I have looked through his speech in vain.—It is true the learned gentleman\* observed that “*blasphemy* had always been held by the common law, of which the scriptures were considered a part, as one of the highest misdemeanors;” but unless we are first given to understand what “*blasphemy*” is, it is mere idle talk to tell us what rank it holds among the various classes of offences which swell our

\* *Learned Gentleman*—a phrase commonly applied in the courts of law to an ill-looking man in a frightful wig and gown, of disgusting and overbearing manners, and only skilful in perverting truth, insulting innocence; and bewildering common sense.

statute books—it is in fact saying that there is a *something*—nobody knows what—that is reckoned by the law of the land as the highest misdemeanor ; and for ought I know, Mr. Editor, I may be guilty of *this something* at this moment.

If by “*blasphemy*” be meant whatever tends to bring religion into ridicule and contempt, a few points must first be ascertained before we can determine what is blasphemy, and what not. Does the definition apply to some particular system of religion exclusively, or to any religion whatever ? If the latter, it will follow that the Lord Chief-Justice, and the gentlemen of the jury, and the Attorney-general, are all guilty of *blasphemy*, because they would feel it their duty to bring into ridicule and contempt any religion whose doctrines appeared to them absurd and unreasonable—Mahometanism, for example. But if by “*blasphemy*” be understood the attempt to bring into ridicule and contempt *some particular system of religion*, the question occurs to us at once—what particular system ? If it should be answered, the established religion of the country—the reply is, that as England was once Papal, of course whatever tended to bring Catholicism into ridicule and contempt must have been adjudged by the laws of the land “*blasphemy* ;” and we good Protestants, who have so happily succeeded in producing this desirable effect, must be all *blasphemers*—unless indeed the laws of blasphemy (if there are any such laws) have been altered, and then it is indispensably necessary that every man should know when such alteration took place, and what was the precise form and tenor of these laws, after they had been thus altered. But what do I say ! the idea of the laws of blasphemy being altered must not be entertained for a moment, because it would involve a supposition that they are not founded on the broad and immutable principles of justice, but merely arise out of the floating opinions and fluctuating sentiments of mankind ; so that what is blasphemy to day may be perfectly innocent to-morrow.

But perhaps it may be said that “*blasphemy*” consists in endeavouring to bring the CHRISTIAN RELIGION into ridicule and contempt ; but who, I pray, shall determine what the Christian religion is ? The Roman Catholic—the member of the establishment—each of the various sects of Protestant Dissenters, will tell you that their own particular mode of faith is the Christian religion ; and I, if asked, would say that none of them have any claim to that character. One thing is certain—that system which supports itself by civil authority, and punishes with pains and penalties those who oppose it—is *not* the Christian religion.

But to keep to the technical terms of the indictment—we are still in the dark as to what this crime can be—the “pub-

lishing a blasphemous and prophane libel on the holy scriptures." Now according to the ideas commonly attached to terms, perhaps nothing can be a more blasphemous and prophane libel on the scriptures, than to declare that they contain doctrines which war against every principle of reason, and contradict the plainest dictates of common sense—that they degrade the nature of man, and insult the character of God—to publish, for example, that they teach a plurality of gods, with passions and caprices like the deities of the heathen mythology—that these gods had condemned to misery and perdition the human species for the single crime of a single individual, and that the wrath of the chief or father of the gods could not be appeased, nor his favour purchased for a few of mankind without the shedding innocent blood—without one of the gods descending on earth, partaking of the nature, and enduring the pains of humanity—to declare, I say, that such sentiments as these are taught in the scriptures, may perhaps come within the meaning of the criminal information for blasphemy. But because my Lord Ellenborough believes such sentiments, and would publish them to the world as Christian truths, is he to be made responsible to the laws of his country? Certainly not! on any principle of justice!

Suppose, Mr. Editor, that the pure truths of Christianity which you have so ardently laboured to inculcate, were suddenly to become general—and that as a reward for your laudable exertions, you, Sir, were appointed Lord Chief-Justice of the Court of King's Bench (a thing not very likely to be sure), and the present Lord Chief-Justice for propagating his opinions were brought before the Court in which you presided, to answer to a criminal information for publishing a blasphemous and prophane libel on the holy scriptures—how would your Lordship act in such a case? with some such language as this, you would reflect true dignity on your office—"By what authority is this man brought to the bar? who are the abettors of this scandalous proceeding?—Sir, the immutable laws of justice, and the sacred principles of liberty, have been violated in your person—your sentiments are certainly dangerous and fanatical—every sensible man must despise them; but you, who believe them to be true, have as much right to publish them to the world as I have my sentiments, or as the designing bigots who have dared to call in the interference of the law against you, have their's.—Law is intended to secure justice, not to prevent it! You are at liberty, Sir, to go and disseminate your sentiments as you please; and those who think them erroneous have the opportunity of proving them to be so, and of exploding them by reason and argument."

Such, Mr. Editor, is the language which a generous love



of freedom would dictate—such is the treatment which, in an unsophisticated state of society, a defendant in such a prosecution would receive—and such, therefore, is not the treatment which the defendant receives in the present prosecution.—No! but a *special* jury are to determine whether he has or has not been guilty of a “blasphemous and prophane libel on the holy scriptures.” Whether the gentlemen who sat on this jury were competent to decide on this point, without first agreeing on the ideas to be attached to the terms—“blasphemous,” “prophane,” “libel,” &c. I will not say; but it is likely that if the twelve gentlemen were severally consulted as to what they understood by such words, they would give at least twelve different meanings. And further, when we observe how readily the jury gave their verdict of *guilty*, one can hardly help asking, have the gentlemen ever *read the book* which they decided to be “a blasphemous and prophane libel on the scriptures,” or did they depend merely on a few garbled extracts put together by a lawyer, without order or connection, just to make out his case?

When I consider the weakness of the Attorney-general's speech, and the fallacy of all his reasoning, I must suppose that it was not in consequence of any thing he had advanced, that the jury found their verdict against the defendant. Perhaps even the bar itself has seldom furnished a speech more destitute of every thing that is pertinent in observation, generous in sentiment, and exalted in conception.

The Attorney-general commenced by saying, “that he had, in the execution of his official duty, felt it incumbent on him to file this information for a libel, so full of impiety and blasphemy, that he had hoped the British press would never have been disgraced by any such production; and the jury had been informed in the opening of the pleadings, that the libel was against the Christian religion and the holy author of it.” What shall we expect next, Mr. Editor, when even a crown lawyer undertakes to defend the Christian religion? “He knew not (he said) how to express in adequate terms his horror of the person who dared to disseminate such doctrines; doctrines which denied the existence of that religion upon which we all depended, and to which we all looked for consolation.” Who is meant by “*we*”? Does the Attorney-general mean to say that he depends on the Christian religion, or looks to it for consolation? If he were to say, that *he depends on the religion of the established church*, every body would understand him, and give him credit for the assertion; but the Christian religion might well have been spared from being associated with the belief and reverence of the pious lawyer.

“The libel (continued the Attorney-general) asserted that

the holy scriptures were from beginning to end a fable, and an imposture—that the apostles were liars and deceivers. The author denied the miracles, the resurrection, the ascension of Jesus Christ; nay, his very existence as the son of God, and even as a man upon earth. He asserts the whole history to be nearly fabulous, and places it on a level with the legends of the heathen mythology.” Well! and what then? If a man pleases to make such gross and palpably false and absurd assertions, is there no way of confronting them but by law? Suppose D. I. Eaton were to publish a book to prove that the Attorney-general is a most virtuous, patriotic, and independent man—a supporter of the rights and liberties of Englishmen, and a friend to justice and humanity—would there be any necessity of preventing the spread of such sentiments, by filing a criminal information against him for libel?

The learned gentleman next attempted an appeal to the feelings of the jury—“He was addressing a jury, some of whom were advanced in years, and all were doubtless connected by the links of human society; some might perhaps be parents, and all had relations of a riper age to whom they were naturally endeared. He would ask, whence did they derive their consolation in the close of life? Whither did they look, if they were conscious of having acted their parts well, to reward—if they were conscious of offences, to forgiveness—whither but to that Being whose very existence was denied by the impious author of the libel before them.”—The allusion I suppose is to Jesus, whose existence Paine certainly does deny in this work; but from the artful manner in which the sentence is worded, the impression might be on the mind of the jury, that the book had denied the existence of God. This was far from ingenuous—“of those who had families, the Attorney-general would ask, what was the first duty they inculcated on their offspring? Doubtless that religious truth, of the authenticity of which all wise men who had duly considered the subject had been persuaded; and what would be their feelings if they found, that either introduced by art or accident, publications like the present had corrupted their religious, and, in the end, destroyed their moral principles?” Their religious or moral principles cannot be worth much, if they are in danger of being destroyed by such a publication; but it is these very trials—these ill-judged prosecutions—which produce all the mischief, by giving an importance to such publications, and crying out against them as alarming and dangerous. Even with children who have been at all accustomed to reason and to weigh evidence, I am persuaded that this pamphlet might be put into their hands with perfect safety: for myself, I am free to declare, that if any one thing has tended more than another

to rivet Christianity on my mind, it has been the perusal of the works of Paine and other deistical writers, and that at an early age.

It is childish to suppose that truth cannot stand the test of examination, or that it loses its importance from the opposition of sophisticated argument, or loose declamation. But the fact is too clear—this publication, and most publications of the sort, assails a something besides Christianity—assails a system that is founded in error, and supported by civil power and authority; and the Attorney-general knows that it must be defended by similar means, or the mighty Fabric will crumble into dust.

Much of the argument of the learned gentleman is completely lawyer-like—abounding in misrepresentation—calculated to mislead weak minds, and only worthy of himself, and the cause he had to advocate. “The object of the book (he said) was to lay the axe to the very root of religion, utterly to expel it from the mind, by treating the whole as a fiction.” Now the real object of the book is to prove, that the Christian religion is not a divine revelation; and priests and statesmen having succeeded to the utmost of their wishes in corrupting that religion, the author views it through the perverted medium of these corruptions, and reasons against it as though the whole were a fable and fabrication. But because a man is carried away by his prejudices, and induced to disbelieve many important truths, in the name of justice, is he to have no credit for those which he does believe?

Mr. Paine declared himself a believer in the existence of God—that goodness and wisdom are his essential perfections—that religion consists in acts of virtue, and justice, and good faith between man and man—and that those who act well their parts in this world, may indulge a hope of reward in a future state. I am bold then to say, that the object of the book is *not* to expel religion from the mind; nor can it produce that effect, except through the officious interference of the Attorney-general.

The motives that induced Paine to write against the Christian religion cannot be ascertained—whether it was a love of fame, a love of novelty, or a love of opposition, is equally conjectural; but the base intentions which his base enemies have ascribed to him, I cannot believe he deserved. It will be one tribute of honour to his departed name at least, that he received the abuse and execrations of men, who were in point of fact, far greater enemies to Christianity than himself.

But it may be said, that this publication must be judged by its tendency, and that those who have professed themselves Deists, and disavowed all belief in Christianity, have generally



been immoral, and regardless of the dictates of religion. In this, I fear, there is too much truth; but why is the objection to apply against Deists in particular? Let the Attorney-general look at those who *profess* Christianity—let him cast his eyes among the saints at the bar—the Christians in the senate—and the servants of the Lord in the church.

But mark the manner in which the lawyer anticipates the verdict of the jury—"What reliance had the Attorney-general that he should receive from the jury that honest verdict which he knew he should receive?—on what were they sworn that their verdict should be true?—to what did they refer when they called on God to help them accordingly as they should faithfully discharge their duty?—to what but to the truth of those holy gospels, which the defendant denounced as falsehood and imposture." This kind of language appears to me a libel on the jury—it supposes they are not bound by any sense of duty, or love of justice, to give a fair and honest verdict, but that the *mere form of an oath* is the only tie on their consciences.

Oaths are certainly sanctioned by the custom of most countries, but they arise out of the frailty of society. Whoever has attended to the trifling manner of administering the oaths in our courts of justice, will not be disposed to attach much importance to them; but even if we are willing to allow some little more weight to them than to a Custom-house oath, one thing is certain—that Jury who cannot be depended on before they are sworn, are not to be trusted afterwards. I do not see that the veracity of the jury is necessarily connected with the truths of the gospels. Suppose, for a moment, that the gospels are a fabrication, will it follow, as a consequence, that the jury are a set of rogues? I cannot perceive the connection between the premises and the conclusion. One would really imagine, from the strain of the Attorney-general's argument, in this respect, that there is not a grain of truth or honesty in the world, but what is produced by a belief in the scriptures. But what opinion are we to form of the various nations who have never heard of the gospels? The polished states of antiquity, which have flourished and decayed long before they were written? how was private confidence, and public faith, and jurisprudence, carried on in the absence of Christianity?

After much more trifling of this sort, the learned gentleman proceeded to call the attention of the jury to the law of the case; and in order to shew that the court was competent to punish in the present instance, adduced a variety of cases in which similar offences had been tried in that court, with the doctrines and opinions of the Judges thereon: to all which it is only necessary to observe, that if it is not just in itself to pro-

ceed against opinion by law, the mere existence of such proceedings, or their frequent repetition, cannot make it so. What is the solemn nothingness of the bench? what is the learned quibbling of the bar? What are musty parchments and the dusty records of legal oppression, if they are opposed by the plain dictates of Reason!! and the eternal principles of Right!!

We have thought the idea of the Attorney-general's defending the Christian religion ridiculous enough, but when he declared himself "an advocate for the freedom of the press," and a protector of moral, political, and religious freedom of discussion," surely the gravity of my Lord Ellenborough must have relaxed into laughter.—The professions of the lawyer will be credited, when people can be brought to believe that the *inquisition* asserted and protected the rights of conscience.

The concluding observation of the Attorney-general deserves notice, inasmuch as it tends to develope the whole secret of this prosecution; for it comes out, that it is the *national religion*, after all, about which this alarm has been raised. "There was no doubt (said the learned gentleman) but the publication was punishable, and not only in this but in every civilized state it had been held politic so to punish all such attempts to subvert the *national religion*." Undoubtedly the policy of states would punish every attempt to subvert the national religion, for *national religions* have been one of the principal means by which the traffic of governments have been carried on. If *national religions* have tended to prevent the growth of intellect—to damp the ardour of enquiry—to obstruct the progress of truth—to degrade and enervate the human mind—and to form and fit men for oppression—the policy of states in punishing every attempt to subvert it, is readily accounted for. But the learned gentleman need not be told, that the *national religion* is not the *Christian religion*—that they are as much opposed to each other, as truth is to falsehood—virtue to knavery—or the professions of an Attorney-general to his practice, who declares himself horror-struck at reading a pamphlet against the Christian religion, and yet was not ashamed to defend, in the face of modesty and the world, a Royal Adulterer in the violation of all its precepts.

If I could suppose for a moment that the Attorney-general is a Christian (pardon the supposition, gentle reader), and that he is addressing a Christian jury—what can be more truly inconsistent than to hear him arguing the propriety of punishing "every attempt to subvert the *national religion*," when Christianity itself subverted all the *national religions* of the countries where it was propagated? Equally ridiculous is the learned gentleman's reasoning, as a member of the established



church, and as addressing a Protestant jury—when this very *national religion* which he undertakes to defend, owes its existence to the subversion of the *national religion* of England—  
POPERY.

On my Lord Ellenborough's Charge to the Jury there is little room for remark—almost every thing that can be said being already anticipated in the observations on the Attorney-general's speech; for by some strange co-incidence it always happens, that the opinions of the Judge and Attorney-general are precisely the same on the prosecutions for libel from the crown; in fact in all such trials there is scarcely any other means of distinguishing the speech of the judge from that of the counsel for the crown, but from his Lordship's name being prefixed to it.

Lord Ellenborough took occasion to confirm the opinions of Hale, Kenyon, and Raymond—that the Christian religion is the law of the land. As this appears the principal point of law which was brought against the defendant, it is worth examining: the assertion has been so often made by judges, and delivered with all the gravity of the bench, that some persons may be disposed to attach a vast deal of consequence to it. The subject will be too long for this letter, so that I shall have occasion, Mr. Editor, to trespass on your patience in a future communication, when I purpose particularly to examine this opinion of the learned judges.

The point on which Lord Ellenborough laid the greatest stress, was, that the jury were Christians, and sworn on the evangelists—tacitly inferring, that if they believed the gospels true, they must find the defendant guilty. This would naturally place the jury in this unpleasant situation, that if they gave a verdict of *not guilty*, it would seem to imply their disbelief of the scriptures.

But what, after all, is the mere form of an oath? Do the persons who are sworn on the evangelists think any thing about their truth at the time? I have frequently seen the oaths administered, and as to the effect which the mere kissing the Testament appears to have, or in fact can have, on the minds of honest or even dishonest men, I am persuaded they might just as well kiss the judge's great toe; though in this trial there was something peculiarly appropriate even in the form of the oath, for it might have occurred to the jury, when they were considering their verdict, that they had been sworn on a book, which taught a religion abstracted from the policy of this world—a religion which inculcated candour and liberality, and disclaimed all dominion over the faith of men—and that the great teacher of this mild and generous system was dragged into a court of justice, under the charge of *blasphemy*, and crucified for attempting to *subvert the national religion*!



The judge concluded by saying—"he should leave it to the jury, as Christian men, sworn on the gospel of Christ, to say whether the present was not an atrocious libel on the Christian religion." It is unnecessary to say they "*immediately* found the defendant **GUILTY!**" Your's, &c.

A FRIEND TO TRUE CHRISTIANITY.

## EXTRACTS FROM A PORT-FOLIO.

[Communications for this Article are particularly requested.]

### COURTS.

**H**OW dangerous a situation is royalty, in which the wisest are often the tools of deceit! A throne is surrounded by the train of subtlety and self-interest: Integrity retires, because she will not be introduced by importunity or flattery: Virtue, conscious of her own dignity, waits at a distance till she is sought, and princes seldom know where she may be found; but Vice and her attendants are impudent and fraudulent, insinuating and officious, skilful in dissimulation, and ready to renounce all principles, and to violate every tie, when it becomes necessary to the gratification of the appetites of a prince. How wretched is the man who is thus perpetually exposed to the attempts of guilt, by which he must inevitably perish, if he do not renounce the music of adulation, and learn not to be offended by the plainness of truth.—*Fenelon.*

### ANNUAL EXPENCE OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT.

|                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 2 Archbishops .....        | £35,000   |
| 24 Bishops .....           | 100,000   |
| 24 Deans .....             | 20,000    |
| 50 Archdeacons .....       | 15,000    |
| 200 Prebends .....         | 100,000   |
| 100 Canons .....           | 30,000    |
| 24 Chancellors .....       | 7,000     |
| 5,000 Rectors .....        | 1,000,000 |
| 5,000 Vicars .....         | 500,000   |
| 10,000 Church Clerks ..... | 100,000   |

£1,907,000

The above statement is considerably under-rated, and a number of items are omitted; but it is sufficient to enable the reader to form a tolerably correct idea of the enormous expence attending the church establishment, for doing nothing, or rather worse than nothing.

### THE INQUISITION AND LIBERTY OF THE PRESS.

The inquisition is incompatable with the liberty of the press, which has been decreed with the applause of the whole nation; for that tribunal once re-established, no public writer could be free from alarm, even should he abstain from every topic of religion. While discussing any political question, or explaining the very rudiments of the science of government, he would expose himself to the risk of being accused and punished by that tribunal. We all know, by unfortunate experience, how easy it is to torture the meaning of an expression, and to represent as scandalous an insulated proposition, which, joined with the context, would appear perfectly innocent. We all know with what cunning policy

our kings have availed themselves of the inquisition, to prohibit useful works, which were guilty of no other offence than that of exposing the abuses of despotism. We have not forgotten how many wise and patriotic men have been persecuted as impious or irreligious; neither have we forgotten, that the doctrines of the sovereignty of the nation, of its authority to dictate laws, and of the delegated power of monarchs, have, by a base abuse of texts of holy writ, been condemned as antichristian, and their propagators persecuted, and immured in the dungeons of the inquisition. With such recent facts before our eyes, where is the writer so rash or thoughtless, who would think of instructing the people while such a tribunal existed? The inquisition and the liberty of the press!—it is quite sufficient to mention them, to show that they are placed in the most determined state of mutual hostility.—*Tortado's Speech in the Cortes of Spain, 1811.*

## ORIGINAL POETRY.

### THE PRIEST.

WHO's he—with stately garb and mien,  
With curled wig, and surplice clean,  
Lawn sleeves, gown, scarf, and sash, is seen?

The Priest!

Who's he—to gain a paltry fame,  
*Right Reverend* fixes to his name,  
And titles and distinctions claim?

The Priest!

Who's he—with diligence and care,  
By right divine he does declare,  
Exacts of tithes abundant share?

The Priest!

Who's he—in pedantry affected bred,  
And Greek and barb'rous Latin read,  
Most vainly stores his reverend head?

The Priest!

Who's he—proscribing popish lore,  
As relics all of Babylon's whore,  
Does notwithstanding her adore?

The Priest!

Who's he—if conscience should distress,  
To pardon all men's sins profess,  
And deign (apostle like) to bless?

The Priest!

Who's he—that, search the world around,  
None more ambitious can be found,  
For pride and avarice renown'd?

The Priest!

Who's he—with past success elate,  
Not warned by impending fate,  
Loudly vociferates "*church and state*?"

The Priest!

Who's he—when men reflect maturely,  
Will be depriv'd his honors surely,  
Or not enjoy them so securely?

The Priest!